Local Discourses, Local Practices, and State Power

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Introduction

Many have argued that sexuality is a construct of dominant ideology in a particular historical, political, and socio-cultural context. In particular, the state shows great interest in constructing its population's sexuality through abortion policy, sex education, homosexual rights, welfare, and family policy. The Japanese government is not exceptional in this respect. Since the last part of the twentieth century, Japanese sexual politics has been concerned with problems such as the rising number of single adults, the low birthrate, the aging of the population, the AIDS crisis, and the increasing number of teenage pregnancies and abortions. As a result, government agencies have joined forces to deploy both pro-family and pro-natal policies, in which the Ministry of Education has expanded sex education guidelines.

But questions about the kind of impact these state policies have had on people's experiences remain largely unexplored. As McNay has pointed out, "power relations are only examined from the perspective of how they are installed in institutions and not from the point of view of those subject to power." As a result, scholars tend to assume "the monolithic, unidirectional notion of power" and thus "the normalizing effects of power" on individuals, while neglecting the variety and complexity of subjective experience. Often absent from the literature on sexuality is an extensive discussion of "agency" and "practice."

Thus, this article will discuss how issues of sexuality at the national level have shaped and have been reflected in people's concerns and practices at the local level. I conducted my ethnographic fieldwork at three high schools and one junior high school in the Greater Tokyo Metropolitan Region (shutoken) during the entire Japanese academic year from April 1994 to March 1995. My plan was to examine the degree of incorporation of state policy into their curricula for sex education. To protect their privacy, all names of schools, teachers, and students in this article are pseudonyms. I try to describe how teachers at local schools have reacted to the government's sex education policy; specifically, I aim to show the variety and complexity in local discourses and
practices of sex education.

Research Results
Kida High School: A Public Academic High School

Kida High School is located in one of the dense urban areas in the Greater Tokyo Metropolitan Region. The twenty-minute walk from the station to the high school takes me down a lively street with many low-priced retail shops. On one side of the street, stands Kida High School, where I spent one year as an observer.

Kida High School is a public high school with an academic track. Kida teachers often characterize their students as “the middle of the middle.” One of the teachers told me that being a teacher at Kida is very easy (hidari uchiwa). Because it is not a top school, teachers do not have to exert themselves to push students to succeed in competitive university entrance exams. According to a survey of all 10th-grade students at Kida, more than 80% of them spend only one or two hours studying per day. Instead, they enjoy diverse club and leisure activities; only 10% of the students have part-time jobs (arubaito). In addition, there are few discipline problems at Kida, and students tend to obey their teachers and the school rules. After a political movement in the 1970s, Kida High School stopped requiring the wearing of the school uniform (except on certain occasions such as the entrance and graduation ceremonies). Nevertheless, more than 80% of the students wear school uniforms every day.

According to a social studies teacher, such attitudes reflect what he calls “shitamachi character.” Most of the parents are shopkeepers or factory workers although some are white-collar workers. Regardless of the differences in their occupations, these parents have lived in and cared about the area for a long time. Moreover, borrowing the teacher’s phrase, there is a strong tie between parents and children. Parents actively participate in PTA activities or other school events such as school sports and cultural festivals.

There is some tendency for gender disparity, which is obvious from the courses that students take. Most of the male students attend four-year middle-range colleges in the Tokyo Metropolitan Region, although they often must spend a year after graduation in extra preparation (ronin seikatsu) for the entrance exams. On the other hand, half of the female students attend two-year colleges, while the other half go to specialized schools (senmon-gakkō), such as nursing or design schools. Several of them get jobs immediately after graduation.

Kida High School was designated as a model school for teaching sex education. Although sex education is a project of the entire school, most such projects are promoted solely by health edu-
cation teachers. To my surprise, a young home economics teacher at Kida High School was unaware that the school had even been appointed as a model school. There are eight male and one female health education teachers at Kida High School. One is a part-time, retired teacher, four are in their fifties, one is in her forties, and the remaining three are in their thirties. At the high school, teachers’ rooms are assigned according to subject; these nine teachers are squeezed into a small health education teachers’ room.

After discussions among all the health teachers, they devised a common curriculum for sex education and then all conducted classes based on the same program. According to the program, students are supposed to have a health education class for one hour per week for two years. In their first year, students take a health lecture; in their second year, they participate in a group presentation by choosing a certain topic such as sex crimes, euthanasia, pregnancy, childbirth, suicide, or tobacco and alcohol abuse. The lecture class consists of thirty hours, half of which are devoted to sex education, which is significantly longer than in other schools. Table 1 shows the lecture program for the first-year students at Kida.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of Hours</th>
<th>Topic and Content of Discussion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Orientation; survey of students’ sexual attitudes and behaviors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Results of the survey; the conditions of health and disease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Life stages and health (from birth to death)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Adolescents and sex (sexual attitudes and sexual behaviors)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-6</td>
<td>Reproductive organs and hormones, fertilization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-8</td>
<td>Marriage and health (significance of marriage), family planning (birth control, contraception, abortion), health for pregnancy and childbirth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-11</td>
<td>STDs and AIDS (types of STDs, infection routes, protection)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Conclusion of sex education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-18</td>
<td>Nutrition and health, exercise and health, rest and health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-25</td>
<td>Mental health (brain, relationship between mind and body, desires, control of desires, the establishment of identity [jibun-nashisa])</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>First aid measures-basic knowledge</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Kida High School Syllabus.
Although I sometimes attended the classes of the other teachers, the focus of my observations here is the lecture class by Mr. Harada, who is in charge of the health education teachers (taiiku-shunin). This class is composed of thirty-nine students (nineteen boys and twenty girls). Mr. Harada is fifty years old, one of the “old-timers” in Kida High School. After graduating from a private university and teaching at two public academic high schools, he came to Kida High School and has spent more than ten years here. He knows everything about the school, and even the vice-principal has to consult with him about PTA activities or school events. Thus, he is a very reliable and centrally placed figure in the school.

Nonetheless, or perhaps because of this, other teachers in the health education room looked uncomfortable in his presence. When Mr. Harada was in the room, the other teachers sat quietly, speaking very little. However, once he left the room, they often chatted with one another, drinking tea. Mr. Harada himself liked to go out for a drink at the end of the day and complained that the other teachers often refused his invitations. Every time I visited the health education teachers’ room, I felt an uncomfortable tension among teachers but did not know the reason for it in the beginning. After the first semester was over, a math teacher, who is a good friend of some of the health education teachers, explained the tension to me. When the school was designated as one of the model schools, Mr. Harada and a young teacher, Mr. Noma, monopolized the interviews with outsiders and the reporting task of the school’s accomplishments to the Board of Education. Other teachers were offended by the two men’s behavior because they also had participated in drawing up the plans for sex education instruction. On the other hand, Mr. Harada is very sincere and dedicated in his preparations for class. He made an effort to participate in teachers’ meetings on sex education and always collected up-to-date information on sex education.

Tomei Commercial High School: A Public Vocational High School

Cultural Festival Day at Tomei Commercial High School. There seemed to have been some incident at the gate of the school, for a crowd of people had gathered there. I saw several male Tomei students fighting with boys from another school (not wearing Tomei school uniforms). Several teachers attempted unsuccessfully to stop the fight, and finally a policeman had to be called to stop it. Such fighting is an everyday affair at Tomei Commercial High School and sometimes involves girls as well as boys. One day in April, eight tenth-grade girls beat up another girl, for which each was given a one-week suspension from the school. The targets of such attacks are not only students, but also sometimes teachers. Students are known to hit teachers when they disagree with them.
Most of the students come to Tomei not only because they want to learn vocational skills, but also because they are not qualified to enter academic high schools. Thus, in many cases, students have complicated feelings of detachment regarding school. They come to classes late and sometimes skip them entirely. Even if they are in class, some are sleeping and the others are looking at comics and magazines or listening to music on their Walkmans. Although the school rules prohibit curled hair, hair dye, and cosmetics, many boys dye their hair brown and girls wear lipstick. Because of repeated truancy and suspension, almost 10% of students are expelled from school after a year.

The school is located in one of the older downtown areas. One-fourth of the students come from single-parent families (in most cases, single-mother households). Because many mothers are working, unlike at Kida High School, I noticed that only a few parents showed up for school sports events or the Cultural Festival. Most parents are engaged in blue-collar work, in bars, nightclubs, or the sex trades (mizu shōbai), and in the cheap restaurant trade.

Although students show little enthusiasm for studying, their interest is piqued by several after-school activities. Many have part-time jobs (arubaito) in convenience stores, restaurants, or karaoke bars. Some of the girls engage in semi-prostitution, for example, in dating clubs and telephone clubs. With the money from these part-time jobs, they are busy with dating and going out at night. In particular, dancing at clubs and at parties are popular activities among the students. At the Cultural Festival, some of the boys and girls presented a disco dance with rap music. They danced well, energetically displaying an enthusiasm that was never evident in the classroom.

For a full year, I observed the classroom instruction of Mr. Ide, a health education teacher. I observed two of his classes: one composed of thirteen boys and seventeen girls, the other of fourteen boys and seventeen girls. Mr. Ide is just forty years old and is full of zeal. Although the other teachers always complain about the students' behaviors, I never heard Mr. Ide complaining about them; he even said that being unable to handle students is the teacher's fault. In fact, Mr. Ide is one of the teachers who is very good at handling Tomei students. In his class, students show up on time and listen to him quietly. This comes partly from the fact that he scolds students with a booming voice if they come to class late. However, these are not the only reasons for his success. He always tries to talk with students as much as possible, and, whenever students need help, he is willing to make time to listen to their troubles. As a result, many students come to him and consult him about their family problems (such as their parents' divorce), their future, and even pregnancy problems. Mr. Ide is also in charge of students' life guidance (seikatsu shido tanto) Thus, whenever students cause trouble, he meets their parents or sometimes goes to the police station
to apologize for the students.

In terms of hours for health education, Tomei Commercial High School has the same requirements as those at Kida High School. Students take a one-hour class per week, over two years. However, Mr. Ide's method of teaching sex education is rather unique. Unlike Mr. Harada at Kida High School, he tries to convey as little information and knowledge as possible. Because specific information will change rapidly, he thinks that teaching too much factual information is dangerous. Rather, he adopts group discussion techniques and activities within which students arrive at answers by themselves. He therefore reduces his lecture time to the minimum, as his curriculum for health education for the first-year students shows (See Table 2).

**Table 2** A Health Education Curriculum for the First Year at Tomei Commercial High School, 1994

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of Hours</th>
<th>Topic and Content of Discussion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Life course and stages (lecture)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>Establishment of identity (lecture)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Harmful effects of tobacco (lecture)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-6</td>
<td>AIDS (lecture and group discussion: What if your loved one got AIDS?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Alcohol and drugs; desires and the control of desires (lecture)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Study-hall hour for mid-term exam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-13</td>
<td>Preparation for group presentation (students select a topic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Sports Day (class cancelled)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-20</td>
<td>Group presentation (traffic accidents, AIDS, tobacco, stress, psychology, suicide, diet, drugs, the environment, pregnancy and contraception)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Death: Part 1- Euthanasia; video and discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Death: Part 2 - Earthquakes; lecture about death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Lecture about life: pregnancy, childbirth or abortion?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Writing about pregnancy and childbirth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Group scenario-writing (students select a topic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-27</td>
<td>Presentation of play based on skit writing (pregnancy, childbirth, abortion, AIDS, cancer, traffic accidents)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Eiga Girls’ High School: A Private Girls’ High School**

*Eiga Girls’ High School* is a contrast to Tomei Commercial High School in every sense. The school is located in one of the more prosperous uptown (yamanote) areas. On the way to the high school
is Eiga University, with which Eiga Girls’ High School is affiliated. Graduates of the high school can automatically enter Eiga University, one of the most prestigious universities in Japan. Students, in particular those from the affiliated Eiga Junior High School, tend to come from upper-class families, and very generous donations flow from these families to the school.

Students are proud to have been selected both in terms of their family background and their intelligence. It follows that they tend to be somewhat arrogant, even to their teachers. There is a custom by which students haze a newly hired teacher, by asking difficult questions one after the other. If they find the class boring, students openly sleep, read magazines and comics, roll their hair, or even eat snacks. Unlike students at Tomei Commercial High School, however, they know the limits. When the midterm or final exam is close at hand, students listen to the lecture carefully and often go to the teacher with questions.

They study hard and at the same time play a lot. After school, about half of the students participate enthusiastically in diverse club activities. Most of the clubs are united with clubs of the affiliated Eiga Boys’ High School, so boys and girls at Eiga High School get together through club activities. In addition, boys and girls attend Cultural Festivals or Sports Day at each school, and often develop friendships and romances. They are also busy taking lessons after school. “Three Sacred Regalia” (sanshu no jingi) are what they call piano lessons, English conversation lessons, and tennis lessons. Using long vacations, some students go abroad to learn spoken English.

Their school life, however, is not always happy and innocent. Of the 190 female students per year, half come from the affiliated Eiga Junior High School and the other half from outside the junior high school by passing an extremely competitive entrance exam. Antagonism exists between these two groups. There are some cases in which some students become targets of group harassment. In addition, because the school is so competitive, some students develop stress-related psychological problems. As a result, once a month, a psychiatrist visits the school to counsel them.

Because Eiga is a private high school, the curriculum is comparatively free from the control of the Ministry of Education. The students enjoy a variety of subjects that students in public high school cannot take, for example, French, German, or computer study. Moreover, teachers do not always follow the course of study set out by the Ministry of Education. Unlike teachers at public high schools who have only B.A. degrees, most of the teachers at Eiga Girls’ High School have M.A. degrees or are from professional schools. They tend to conduct the classes in line with their interests and specialties. In addition, because students go on directly to Eiga University, teachers do not have to gear the content of classes to the university entrance exams.
Dr. Suzuki, a health education teacher at Eiga, has, for example, a totally different background than health education teachers at public high schools. Dr. Suzuki graduated from Eiga Girls' High School and then went on to the medical school at Eiga University. She and her husband opened an internal medicine hospital near the Eiga Girls' High School. She has seen many patients who would not have developed their diseases if they had taken better care of their bodies in their younger days. Through this experience she became interested in preventive medicine and wanted to teach it at her alma mater, Eiga Girls' High School. To teach any subject at the high school level, however, one has to have a teacher's license. Undaunted, she entered a teachers college and eventually qualified for a teacher's certificate. Now, while continuing to work as a medical practitioner, she teaches health education classes for 11th and 12th grade students during the week.

She rarely uses the textbooks or guidebooks produced by the Ministry of Education and the local Board of Education. To be more exact, she seldom relies on the content of a textbook. As a qualified medical doctor, she told me that she easily can find mistakes in those materials. Instead, she makes her own printouts for distribution to her students. She does not even use the AIDS pamphlets that all high school students are supposed to receive. Students at Eiga Girls' High School take a one-hour health education class per week for less than two years beginning in the second semester of the second year and continuing into the second semester of the third year. Table 3 shows the curriculum of health education for the second year. The curriculum then moves on in the third year to the reproductive organs, pregnancy, contraception, childbirth, desire and its control, environment, and drugs. As the table of contents of the second-year program shows, the curriculum reflects Dr. Suzuki's interests and strengths as an internal medicine specialist.

Table 3 A Health Education Curriculum for the Second Year at Eiga Girls' High School, 1994

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of Hours</th>
<th>Topic and Content of Discussion (all lectures)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>The operation of the liver; diseases of the liver; hepatitis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The circulatory system and the respiratory system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-7</td>
<td>Blood; diseases of the blood; high-blood pressure; low-blood pressure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Diet and menstruation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-10</td>
<td>The circulatory system and its operation; red blood cells and white blood cells; diseases of white cells; DNA and RNA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Hemophilia; AIDS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-13</td>
<td>AIDS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thus, the sex education curriculum at Eiga Girls’ High School is rather independent of the guidelines of the Ministry of Education.

**Nakate Junior High School: A Public Junior High School**

As 6:00 p.m. approaches, teachers get together in the principal’s room. Almost every other day, teachers have “a meeting for reviewing” after work, which, in fact, is a social gathering. An older teacher, Mr. Higashi, asked: “Well, Kurata [a boy] is really troublesome. Why did he behave violently today?” A language teacher, Ms. Tashiro, responded: “He might be upset with something. But I don’t know what it is.” Vice-principal Murakami said: “By the way, don’t you think that Kinoshita and Shimada’s [both girls] skirts have gotten short these days?” A social studies teacher, Mr. Tanaka, responded: “I know, I told them, but they never changed to longer skirts.” In most cases, their conversations focus on disciplinary problems of students beyond their control. The meetings go on until around 9:00 p.m.. The meetings end with the words of the principal, “All right, now let’s try hard tomorrow” (ashita mo gambarimasho).

Nakate Junior High School is located in one of the entertainment districts in the Greater Tokyo Metropolitan Region (shutoken). From the station to the school, I pass by several major department stores and large restaurants. The neighborhood is also famous for the sex trade including bars, pornography shops, and “love hotels.” At night, many hostesses and prostitutes stand in the street, trying to attract men to their bars. Because it is not a residential area, the size of the school is quite small, having only seventy students per year and a total of twenty teachers. It follows that teachers know each other very well and, like a family, they talk a lot about their troubles and problems.

Because students enter high school after a decisive entrance exam, each high school has a relatively homogeneous group of students. In contrast, a junior high school has to handle students with diverse academic abilities and family backgrounds. In particular, in the case of Nakate Junior High School, the family backgrounds of students are more diverse, reflecting the characteristics of the area. Some are white-collar workers in big banks or government offices because a couple of company apartment buildings are located near the school. Some are self-employed in small businesses such as cheap restaurants, small clothing shops, or barbershops. A couple of them engage in the sex trade.

Accordingly, students have diverse troubles and problems. Several boys have delinquency problems, frequently not attending classes and loitering in the amusement areas near the station. Even if they show up at school, they read magazines, listen to their Walkman music, smoke, and
even talk aloud to disturb the teacher’s lecture. Some students, mostly children of white-collar workers, have come to this public school because they failed the examinations of selective private junior high schools. Thus, those students have enormous resentment and dissatisfaction with the school and the teachers. As a result, they tend to adopt an apathetic and defiant attitude. Those who have been frustrated may pick out a weak student as a target of group harassment (ijime). The problems of girls seem even more serious. A number of girls, in particular ninth-graders, engage in semi-prostitution through telephone clubs.

Teachers at Nakate Junior High School thus face various problems and difficulties in the daily life of the school. A young music teacher, Ms. Kikuta, told me that many teachers at Nakate Junior High School are discouraged by their assignment there. Moreover, Nakate has been designated as one of the model schools for sex education, which means that teachers must invest a lot of time in making plans for the sex education curriculum. Furthermore, unlike the high school, Nakate Junior High School plans to develop sex education not only in health education classes but also in other subjects including homeroom, moral education, home economics, language, social science, and science. As a result, almost all teachers are required to be involved in the model school project. So, “a meeting for reviewing” is a necessary and important occasion for teachers to voice their discontent and console each other.

Confusion and Dissatisfaction at the Local Level

Throughout my fieldwork, I had many opportunities to hear teachers express the opinion that teaching sex education is a very difficult task. A principal at a “dropout” high school told me that it is very difficult to save the time for planning and conducting sex education because the school is busy dealing with the delinquency problems of students. A health education teacher at an “elite” high school told me that other teachers in his school consider sex education unnecessary because it is not a subject on the university entrance examination. A school nurse at a junior high school related that when she taught a sex education class, one boy asked how many times she had sex with her husband. She thinks that such responses cause teachers (in particular, young teachers) to be reluctant to conduct sex education in the classroom.

For various reasons, which reflect a school’s situation, many teachers simply choose to ignore the guidelines produced by the Ministry of Education and skip sex education instruction. According to a survey among public school teachers, only 54.8% of junior high school teachers and 49.7% of high school teachers have taught sex education in class. As for AIDS education, the rate is even lower: it is taught by only 24.0% of junior high school teachers and 40.9% of high school
teachers. Even if a teacher does teach sex education, the teacher does not always follow the Ministry guidelines. Like Dr. Suzuki at Eiga Girls’ High School, teachers at private schools sometimes do not use the textbooks and guidebooks produced by the Ministry of Education, and create their own curricula according to school policy or personal objectives. In spite of the efforts of the Ministry and the Board of Education to hold teachers’ meetings and produce materials for sex education, their policies have not been adopted by a majority of teachers.

Once a school has been designated as a model school for sex education, however, the situation is totally different. The school then must draw up a plan for sex education instruction, actually implement this plan, and sometimes demonstrate the classroom instruction by inviting the members of the local Board of Education or the Ministry of Education. In addition, because the school receives funding for model school projects, the school is obligated to submit a report of expenditures and accomplishments at the end of each year. As a result, teachers at the assigned school have to spend long additional hours on these model school projects.

Therefore, when the Board of Education asked Nakate Junior High School to become a model school of sex education, all of its teachers opposed the proposal. The Board of Education, however, was persistent. In fact, before asking Nakate Junior High School, the Board of Education had asked another school but had failed to persuade it to accept the project. In order not to repeat the failure, the Board of Education deployed a careful behind-the-scenes strategy. First, members of the health education section of the Board of Education contacted a former principal at Nakate, Mr. Egawa, who was also a health education teacher, and asked him to contact and persuade the current principal, Mr. Ueda, and several long-term teachers at Nakate. Because Principal Ueda and the other teachers had worked with Mr. Egawa for a long time, the members at the Board of Education knew that teachers would have difficulty refusing Mr. Egawa’s request. At the same time, the members at the Board of Education contacted the leaders of the local Sex Education Association. Because Vice-principal Murakami, and a teacher, Mr. Agawa, at Nakate Junior High were members of the local Sex Education Association, they also had difficulty in refusing the request of the leaders. Finally, Nakate Junior High School reluctantly accepted the model school project.

However, Principal Ueda, and Vice-principal Murakami, did not (more accurately, could not) give a complete explanation about the decision to teachers. As a result, there was a considerable amount of dissatisfaction with the decision among most of the Nakate teachers. As a young school nurse teacher, Ms. Mizuta, expressed it:
We all had already opposed the project in teachers’ meetings, so we thought that the model school project was dead. But suddenly, Vice-principal Murakami told us, “The budget has already been set up for our school, so we will do the model school project.” I don’t know entirely what happened and why we have to do this. I felt uncomfortable that they pushed it on us.

New teachers like Ms. Mizuta, who were unaware of the maneuvering of the Board of Education, could not know the process through which the school had to accept the project, and they felt the decision had been forced on them. On the other hand, a science teacher, Mr. Sugimoto, was also angry with the decision for a different reason:

We are already very busy. Since I am a ninth-grade teacher, I have to guide students for the high school entrance examination. I have to collect the data of high schools and meet students for several times to decide which school exam they should take. I do not come home before 7:00 p.m. these days. Even if I am at home, sometimes, I talk with students or parents by phone for two hours. Where can I find the time to make a plan for sex education?

In fact, many teachers were already occupied with their work and claimed they had no time to conduct the model school projects. Moreover, Mr. Sugimoto pointed out the difficulty of conducting sex education with students who have diverse sexual experiences.

On the other hand, a health education teacher, Ms. Sasaki, knew very well the importance of AIDS education for removing prejudices, and yet she opposed the model school project for another reason:

I don’t oppose doing AIDS education itself; rather, I oppose the process in which the school accepts the model school project. If it were decided as a result that reflected our voices, that’d be OK, but it was pushed on us from above (ue no hito). Everyone says that the higher-ups have accepted it because of their promotion. Vice-principal Murakami is always like that, thinking about his own interests.

Ms. Sasaki then went on at length about how Vice-principal Murakami was arrogant and always pushed his opinion on other teachers. Although Ms. Sasaki’s statements reflect some emotional bias against the vice-principal, her dissatisfaction is to some degree understandable. If the school
accepts the model school designation, the administrators of the school can include this on their records, which will be advantageous to their promotions in the future. On the other hand, although they have to spend considerable time on the project, the general teachers can neither claim it on their records nor get any benefits. Therefore, some teachers, including Ms. Sasaki, were dissatisfied that all their efforts would be made for the benefit of those at the top.

Thus, teachers at the Nakate Junior High School opposed the sex education projects for diverse reasons. Their confusion and dissatisfaction came to a head in a teachers' meeting in September that gathered all teachers at Nakate to design a plan for sex education curriculum. A social studies teacher, Mr. Agawa, who had been assigned to be the person in charge of the model school project, opened the meeting:

Thank you very much for coming to today's meeting. Before the meeting begins, let me explain why it is difficult for teachers to teach sex education in spite of its importance. The first problem is when we have to teach. Sex education is not confined to one subject and could be taught in any subject. It seems to me that it is better to use the moral education class or the homeroom class. We have the moral education class or the homeroom class once a week, but in reality, they are used for preparation for school events such as School Sports, so we have difficulty setting aside the time for sex education. The second problem is that our teachers have not studied sex education for the purpose of teaching it. There are even many teachers here who did not take sex education class when they were students, so they know little about sex education. The next problem is the content we should teach. We don't know how much students have learned in elementary school; or students might have differences in their sexual knowledge. In addition, we are hesitant to talk about sexual intercourse in class, and we don't have a consensus about how much we can teach in class. Therefore, we have a lot of problems dealing with sex education.

The social studies teacher, Mr. Agawa, was in a complicated position. The principal and the vice-principal had urged him to promote the model school project; at the same time, he had heard a lot of complaints and dissatisfaction from the other teachers. Placed between them, he had decided to show open sympathy and understanding toward his colleagues to elicit their cooperation. The meeting continued:

Mr. Agawa: However, in actuality, we have accepted it [the model school project], so we have
to do something. We have to decide when and how we teach and conduct sex education classes according to the plan. We have to adjust our schedules to the plan, not vice versa. I hate to say this, but we have no option but to conduct sex education classes. I know that it is a difficult thing to ask, but . . . So, first of all, may I ask when we shall teach?
(No teachers responded. Finally, Mr. Higashi, a longtime teacher spoke.)

Mr. Higashi: Well, we have four months left: November, December, January, February [before the Japanese school year ends]. How about trying class once a month?

Mr. Agawa: It sounds good. In that case, there are several options. First of all, we all conduct sex education classes at the same time, although we cannot see the classes of other teachers. As an alternative, we could have students do presentations in groups, so we don’t have to teach. May I ask your opinion about that?

(Again, silence)

Mr. Higashi: Well, have any of you taught about AIDS in class before?

(Silence)

Mr. Agawa: AIDS is a sexually transmitted disease, so it is one area of health education class. However, in my opinion, we should not confine the model school project to one subject, one teacher. We should develop it among many teachers, using homeroom class and moral education class.

Mr. Higashi: You are right.

It appears that Mr. Agawa and Mr. Higashi had discussed these arrangements prior to this meeting. Because they knew that other teachers would say nothing, as if it were no business of theirs, they decided to make it clear that all teachers needed to be involved in the model school project, rather than limiting involvement to health education teachers only.

Mr. Agawa: Then, when shall we start our sex education classroom?

(Again no responses. The silence continued for two minutes. Ms. Asai, the home economics teacher, was even sleeping. Finally, Principal Ueda spoke.)

Principal Ueda: Well, it appears that it may be difficult for all teachers to start at once, so I suggest, for example, Mr. Agawa, you will do it first so that other teachers can observe it. Later you can discuss your class and develop your own class. How about that? Since most of you have not done sex education, it is better to see another’s class instruction before you practice it.
Mr. Agawa: Now, the principal has suggested one plan. Would you agree with it?

(Again silence)

Principal Ueda: (Looking irritated at the lack of responses). Anyhow, we have to do it, so please think about it more seriously. As I said, you have options: either we will teach classes all at once or somebody will teach a class first and other teachers will observe. What do you think about it?

(Still no responses)

Mr. Agawa: It is difficult to call on you one-by-one, so I expect your opinion on your own initiative.

Mr. Higashi: I think that the way that the principal has suggested is good.

Mr. Agawa: All right. If you could give me time, I will be the first. Then you will do it the next time. Now, I would like to ask your opinion.

You have options. Plan A is that I will do it first, and you will observe. Plan B is that all teachers start it all at once. Teachers who agree with Plan A, raise your hand (Nine teachers raised their hands slowly). Then, teachers who agree with Plan B, raise your hand (No teachers raised their hands). All right. Nine out of fifteen, so we have decided that we will take Plan A.

Six teachers still did not respond at all, remaining silent. It seems to me that their silence has significant meaning. According to Lebra\(^i\), Japanese silence can be analyzed into four aspects: as truthfulness, social discretion, embarrassment, or defiance. I think that the teachers’ silence here signifies something between defiance and social discretion. By not saying anything, teachers tried to show their defiance, such as “I disagree with the model school project,” or “I am not going to cooperate in this project.” However, at the same time, most of them were too discreet to express their disagreement, because it would invite hostility and disapproval from the principal and vice-principal, who have promoted the model school project. As a result, most of the teachers chose a strategy of keeping silent throughout the meeting. At the end of the meeting, however, a science teacher, Mr. Sugimoto, did express his disagreement:

Mr. Agawa: Another topic we should discuss concerns the material we are going to use. It is better to have some guidebook, (showing a guidebook to every teacher). If the students have read it before class, it is easy for our teachers to conduct the class. Since the Board of Education gave us the money (for the model school project) and it costs just 420 yen (about $4),
maybe we could buy about 200 to show it to our students.

Principal Ueda: Well, we have 200,000 yen (about $2,000) from the Ministry of Education, so it is a good idea to buy them.

Vice-principal Murakami: Right. We can buy them.

Principal Ueda: How about buying the guidebook as Mr. Agawa has suggested?

Mr. Higashi: I think that it is easier for us to do a class with a guidebook.

Mr. Agawa: Then, is it OK that our school will buy these guidebooks?

(After a long silence, Mr. Sugimoto stood up.)

Mr. Sugimoto: May I ask something? Is the content of the book the same for seventh-graders and ninth-graders?

Mr. Agawa: Yes, it is the same content. There is only one book.

Mr. Sugimoto: That seems to be a problem. I think that it is too early to show it to seventh-graders. It is OK to show it to ninth-graders, because they have learned and see it objectively, but as for seventh-graders, it is too much for them.

As Mr. Sugimoto spoke, he became upset so that he moved his target of attack from the purchase of the guidebook to the model school project itself:

Mr. Sugimoto: I am opposed to people talking only about AIDS education. As a science teacher, I want to teach AIDS as just one of many viruses. Why do we have to teach only AIDS, by the way? We have other viral diseases such as tuberculosis and gonorrhea. In addition, if we bought this guidebook, we would have to do the class according to the book. I am planning to teach AIDS as a viral illness in my science class, but I can't teach what I have planned if we have the guidebook. So, I oppose distribution of the guidebook to students.

Mr. Agawa: All right. All teachers have not looked at the book. So why don't you look at it first? The next time we can discuss it. If there are no comments or questions, we will finish the meeting. Thank you very much.

To avoid further disagreements, Mr. Agawa closed the meeting in haste. As this example shows, the teachers' way of showing defiance is not always with "silence." Once their tolerance had reached its limit, their dissatisfaction and resentment erupted strongly as this case shows.

Because of the opposition of teachers, Nakate Junior High School was able to implement and introduce the "model class" only three times during the year: "Cooperation between Men and
Women” (in a Japanese language class for first-year students), “Changing the Form of Marriage” (in a social science class for second-year students), and “Marriage and Family” (in a moral education class for third-year students).

Conclusion

My research shows the different ways in which public and private schools provide a sex education curriculum to reflect the often divergent goals and interests of local teachers. Japanese school teachers are not “docile” agents whose action can be controlled by state policy. On the contrary, teachers often ignore the national curriculum and create their own curriculum. For example, at a public junior high school, many teachers refused to participate in developing and providing sex education classroom instruction for the model school project. In other cases, teachers at private schools sometimes do not use the textbooks or guidebooks produced by the Ministry of Education and the local Board of Education. Thus, local teachers are active agents who develop their sex education curricula based on their own interests and viewpoints about sexuality.

But what is distinctive about sex education for teachers who do not carry out the government guidelines is that sex education (often along with health education class) is not included among the subjects on university entrance examinations. Therefore, unlike the “main” subjects such as mathematics and English, teachers do not have to gear the content of their classes to the national course of study associated with entrance examinations, and therefore they may even skip sex education. Another crucial reason results from teachers’ hesitation to talk about sex to their students. Like parents who hesitate to talk with their children about sex, many teachers also find it difficult to bring up sexual matters in a classroom context and try to avoid such occasions, using various excuses such as “I’m too busy.”

Even if a teacher is dedicated to providing sex education according to the official policy, motivation to do so is often connected with his or her own interests such as promotion. Because health education is considered a “minor” subject not included in entrance examinations, indeed, the sex education project is one of few ways for health education teachers to show their accomplishments and gain promotion to administrative positions. Therefore, it is wrong to assume that teachers who follow government guidelines do so out of blind obedience to the government policy.

Sex education has continued to be a crucial and contentious issue in 21st-century Japan, in which people debate about when, what, and how to teach sex education to children. In those discussions, political agendas and national ideologies tend to take precedent over local concerns. As I have tried to show, however, local teachers have their own motivations, viewpoints, and educa-
tional goals. Consequently, they easily reconfigure or "resist" state policy according to their own interests. We need to pay more attention to human intention and action in local settings in order to deepen our understanding of the relationships between state power and the subjective experience\(^{10}\).

Notes

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6. Ibid., p133.

7. Ibid., p137.


9. See for example,


